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RUEHFR/USMISSION UNESCO PARIS PRIORITY 0462
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA PRIORITY 3402
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 066810

SIPDIS
UN
NAIROBI FOR PERMREP
MONTREAL USICAO

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [AORC](#) [SENV](#) [KGHG](#) [UNEP](#)
SUBJECT: INSTRUCTIONS ON CARBON NEUTRAL UN

¶1. This is an Action Request. Please see paragraphs 6
- 9.

¶2. Summary: In 2007, UN Secretary General (SG) Ban Ki-moon ordered the UN system (including UN agencies as well as UN programs and funds) to become carbon neutral. UN agencies implementing this directive are developing carbon neutrality plans that may include both conservation measures and carbon offsets. While we support and encourage conservation, we oppose the purchase of carbon offset credits using assessed contributions or U.S. voluntary contributions. This message instructs posts to deliver this position to UN agencies and to gather data on existing and planned carbon neutrality measures at UN agencies. End Summary.

BACKGROUND

¶3. The UN Environment Program (UNEP) is in charge of the UN-wide effort to become carbon neutral. UNEP asserts that it has already achieved carbon neutrality. According to press reports, UN bodies will use a variety of mechanisms to implement Ban's neutrality goal - from conserving energy to carbon offset purchases. UN agencies purchased nearly \$100,000 worth of carbon credits to offset their travel to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations in Bali last December. Our concern is related to how each UN agency will fund activities, like purchasing credits, that are effectively outside of their core competencies and mandates.

¶4. Carbon offset mechanisms are multiplying as this activity gains popularity. The UN may use a mechanism set up under the Kyoto Protocol, the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), for UN carbon offset payments. The CDM focuses on investing in clean energy technology in developing countries. Two percent of the funds invested in the CDM are funneled into the another Kyoto Mechanism, the Adaptation Fund, which is managed by the Global Environment Facility and addresses a wide range of issues to help developing countries adapt to climate change. Both mechanisms pose problems for the United States because we are not a party to the Kyoto Protocol and cannot legally fund Protocol mechanisms. If the UN purchases credits through the CDM, it is in effect subsidizing industrial development in emerging markets, as well as contributing to the Adaptation Fund to finance activities like building sea walls or investing in agriculture. If UN bodies use their regular budget funds

for these purchases, money that Congress allocates to be spent on those bodies' core missions will be spent on purchasing carbon credits in realms outside their individual mandates.

¶15. The USG position is that any UN purchases of carbon credits must be financed by voluntary funds. We cannot/not support use of assessed contributions from the regular budget for this purpose. A decentralized UN system means that this issue will be addressed in the governing body of each UN agency, as well as the governing bodies of many UN programs and funds.

ACTION REQUESTS

¶16. Posts are requested to find out what the UN bodies within their purview are doing to implement the SYG's request to become carbon-neutral, including how they plan to calculate their carbon footprint, what steps they intend to take to reduce their carbon footprint, whether or not they plan to purchase carbon credits in order to offset carbon emissions, and if so, how such purchases would be financed and monitored. This request includes the UN Secretariat and all UN field missions, including peacekeeping operations and political missions.

STATE 00066810 002 OF 002

¶17. Posts are instructed to report proposals by UN bodies to use either regular budget or voluntary funds to purchase carbon offsets or otherwise move towards carbon neutrality to IO for guidance (POC: IO/EDA Rebecca Webber). Posts are instructed not/not to agree to allocation of any assessed contributions ("regular budget funds") to purchase carbon offset credits.

¶18. During discussions, Posts may wish to draw from the following points:

-- The United States wishes to commend (insert name of agency) for its commitment to addressing climate change and reducing its carbon footprint.

-- The UN can simultaneously reduce its carbon footprint and become a more efficient organization. We urge the UN system to also look at ways to reduce its overall environmental impact by, for example, reducing water and energy use and reducing the production of solid waste and the use of toxic substances, as well as reducing its carbon emissions.

-- The United States enthusiastically supports measures by UN bodies to reduce carbon emissions through conservation and efficient management of resources. Various energy saving measures, such as physical plant improvements, reductions in travel, including by replacing official travel with telephone or video conferencing, reducing meeting frequency, coordinating meeting locations and timing to minimize delegation travel, and reducing the use of business class travel, will result in significant cost-savings as well.

-- We understand that UN bodies are considering purchasing carbon credits from either the Clean Development Mechanism or another source. We have several concerns about this.

-- It is clear that the purchase of carbon offsets will have budgetary implications and therefore must be explicitly authorized by the agency's governing body.

-- We are not convinced that UN bodies will be able to ensure that the credits go toward supporting verifiable, transparent projects that contribute to each UN body's

core mandate. Most UN bodies do not have the resources to engage in project identification or verification. Moreover, by purchasing credits, many UN bodies may be effectively funding activities that fall outside their mandates.

-- Because of these concerns, we oppose the purchase of carbon offset credits by the United Nations or bodies within the UN system. In particular we will oppose any proposal to use regular budget funds for this purpose.

-- The United States believes that achieving carbon neutrality objectives should not impede the achievement of primary UN mandates. Therefore we oppose short-term efforts that divert resources away from the core humanitarian, development, or social missions of UN agencies.

[19](#). Please slug responses to IO/EDA Rebecca Webber (WebberRE@state.gov).
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